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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the development of the Penang Public Library (Malaysia) Children's Library. The first section discusses the role of the community. The second section provides background, including library objectives drawn from the key missions in the UNESCO Public Library Manifesto. The third section addresses creative strategies for fundraising, including direct mail fundraising, raising funds from the corporate sector, and special events fundraising. (MES)

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The Children's Library : a gift of love from the community

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Introduction

Malaysia's '2020 Vision' is that of a nation that is fully developed in all dimensions : economically, politically, socially, spiritually, psychologically and culturally. Through this 'vision' we aspire to become a scientific and progressive society that is innovative and able to contribute to the scientific and technical civilization of the future. (Sunday Star, June 2, 1991)

Penang has a goal of being recognized as a fully developed state by the year 2020. In this aspect the Penang Public Library Corporation conceptualizes its own mission, vision and strategic plan in line with the state's vision and development plan.

The Penang public library scenario is one of which rapid development has taken place after the 1990's. At present the Corporation has expanded tremendously with its central library in Seberang Jaya, Prai, with branches in 5 districts namely Georgetown, Balik Pulau, Bagan Ajam, Bukit Mertajam and Jawi. The Corporation also has its own Children's Library at Scotland Road together with 10 mobile libraries and 43 village libraries serving 2 million people on the island of Penang and the mainland.

The Penang Public Library has always played an important role in promoting literacy, disseminating information and knowledge, as a social institution and a center for information to its community and society. As a recreational, educational and cultural center the Penang Public Library with its network of libraries all over Penang has been the main means for information distribution especially for school

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children and the public as a whole. Due to its function and role, the public library has undergone various changes from operating and servicing through the traditional means to a center of information and research with the latest information technology and the availability of various databases not mentioning its own database. The main library in Seberang Jaya is fully automated and is now in stages in implementing a network of borderless libraries to link all its branches, village and mobile libraries within Penang and also to other libraries and information services through its electronic Library network.

Penang Childrens' Library

Role of the community

The UNESCO Manifesto stresses creating and strengthening the reading habit in children from an early age and emphasizes the task that the public library must promote literacy in both the traditional and the modern sense by supporting, initiating and participating in literacy programmes and activities for all age-groups. The task of encouraging positive reading interest to foster a love for reading which will promote reading culture and society is not the responsibility of the state library alone but a concerted effort of all parties .

We must realize that raising funds for the Penang Public Library, a semi governmental body, is tougher when compared to raising funds for non governmental organization especially Non Governmental Bodies that touch the people's hearts for example the Orphanage, Spastic Children and Abused Children. The Penang Public Library being a semi-governmental body that operates from a grant given by the government gives the public a general perception that the Government is solely responsible for providing these services. So how did we change the attitude of the people/community?

The library can play a role to reach the heart of the community. Getting the community to know the importance of providing library services to the children and the objectives of the Children's Library put across to the community that they too are socially responsible for the existence of a library for the children. If the community believes in the cause for the Children's Library then they will have the vision to provide the assistance required. The community must be made to realise that it is essential that a good supply of excellent and appropriate books be made available for a child's educational and cultural development.

Fundraising is more than just getting funds. It requires a broad and deep commitment by the Children's Library Committee to face the public and to make our objectives and presence felt. These are strong comments because one of the most primary motivators for donors to give is that people identify with the cause. Quite often people are willing to give for a cause that they believe in. This is also expressed in terms of the concern of donor for the cause that the organization stands for. One of the rules of fund raising is be passionate as fund raising is a warm-hearted affair. People seldom give

for rational reasons, they give because their hearts tell them to. A fundraiser therefore has to be committed to the cause he or she is representing. Our message has to be bought over with passion. It was this passion that drove the wives of the Penang's Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister together with all the State Executive Counselors' wives to work with the community and the state government in establishing the PENANG CHILDREN'S LIBRARY.

Background

Research has proved that children who are introduced to books in their preschool years have a considerable advantage over those who were not. Educationalists generally recognize that children learn more in their first five years than lives they will learn at any other time in their being aware that reading and Library usage are key factors in a child's intellectual development. Children who read are more likely to be successful in school and later in life and getting an early start by having stories read or told to them is vital in this process.

In a survey on literacy conducted in Penang in 1997, it was discovered that only 37% of the respondents were members of a library outside of school. Due to this alarming percentage rate of children being members of a library the urgent need to set up an independent Children's Library as opposed to a children's corner in an adult library was spearheaded by the Penang Chief Minister's wife and his Deputy's wife. The main aim of establishing the Children's Library is to provide a center mainly for children between the ages of 3 to 15 years so as to inculcate and nurture reading and life long learning habits among them. The Children's Library's role is also to organize programs and activities to inculcate reading, stimulate learning and promote awareness of library skills.

UNESCO in 1961 published a document written by Andre Maurois which stresses very clearly children's need for Library services. Sissel Nilsen in her paper 'The UNESCO Public Library Manifesto : an investment for the future' in the regional Conference on Public Libraries in 1997 in Kuala Lumpur quoted a short passage from the above mentioned document :
"It is in early life that a taste for books and the habits for using libraries and their resources are mostly easily acquired. A Public Library must have a children's corner. Most children have not enough money to buy books, nor have their parents enough money to give them books. Only in a library will they find good books, which will save them from reading mediocre or dangerous ones...to an intelligent child, shelves full of books among which he is free to browse open a veritable paradise.'

Out of the 12 key missions in the UNESCO Public Library Manifesto (1994) five of these form the basis of the objectives of the Penang Children's Library :-

- 1.Creating and strengthening the reading habit in children from an early age.
- 4.Stimulating the imagination and creativity of children and young people.
- 5.Promoting awareness of the cultural heritage and appreciation of the arts, scientific, achievements
  and innovation.
- 11.Facilitating the development of information and computer skills and
- 12.Supporting and participating in literacy activities and programmes for all age groups, and initiating
  such activities if necessary.

It is encouraging to note that the UNESCO Public Library Manifesto of 1949, 1972 and 1994 editions strengthened the vision and mission of these ladies later appointed by Penang State Executive Council as the Penang Children's Library Committee in 1991. Reading ability is fundamental, and it is

important that public libraries encourage parents to use books and read aloud for their children from an early age, talk with them and tell tales from their own culture (Sissel Nilsen, 1997).

It was with this mission in mind that the Penang Children's Library Committee embarked on a state wide campaign to raise funds from the corporate sector to set up a public library solely for children. 22nd May 1991 saw the establishment of the Penang Children's Library Committee with the Chief Minister's wife as the Patron and the Deputy Chief Minister's wife as the Chairman of the Committee. Members of the committee comprised of wives of the state executive council, the wife of a chairman of the corporate sector, and the chairman of the wives of the government staff organization (PUSPANITA), a lawyer, an architect, a librarian from the University Library, a chief executive officer from the Industrial sector, with the Penang Public Library Corporation as the secretariat. The composition of the Children's Library Committee was drawn from both the public and the private sectors with the aim of not only setting up the Children' Library but able to solicit volunteers and raise funds for the establishment of the Library. It was decided that the State Government provided an initial start-up grant and the Children's Library Committee was to raise funds for the equipment, collection and maintenance of the Library. The state government also provided a building for the library and suggested that the management of the library be run by volunteers from the community.

Creative Strategies For Fundraising

As have been mentioned earlier that fundraising for a government body is not an easy task especially when the public feels that it is the sole responsibility of the government to provide library services. Fundraising is a serious business. It requires commitments, dedication, sincerity, hard work and personal sacrifice from the Committee. The Committee was successful in raising funds through these strategies :-

- **Direct mail fundraising** involves the Committee to identify donors and follows up by sending direct mails to these donors at their home and business addresses. Through direct mail the Committee recognizes three target groups namely :

  - Commerce and industry ,
  - Trust and Foundations and
  - Private individuals

In direct mail fundraising the objective is to approach the donors and let them know what is the Committee doing. The contents of the direct mail include the following :-

i) Information for the donors

ii) What to do with the money

iii) Make the donor know and understand the benefits i.e. income tax exemption, condition and policy.

iv) Thanking the donor

v) Authorized signatures – influential personality (in this case the patron of the Children's Library Committee is the chief minister's wife)

Fundraising through direct mail is one of the fastest growing areas of income generation and is long term. It was also discovered that 80% of the fundraising income for NGOs are the private individuals.

The committee was very fortunate as both the patron and the chairman are influential personalities. Due to the standing of the committee members in the public and private sectors, the committee did

well with this direct mail fundraising. They were able to raise a substantial amount in kind and in cash and were successful in getting the library opened to the public in July 1993, with an initial collection of 8,000 volumes of books and equipped with multimedia resources.

- **Raising Funds From The Corporate Sector**

The committee did not stop fundraising activities after the Children's Library was set up. They enlisted a few corporate bodies to sponsor children's activities at the library. Again having members from the corporate sector as committee members paved the way for the committee to identify companies that have an annual budget put aside for social obligations. We must bear in mind that companies do not donate but they invest. As such companies need to know what are their returns, for example if a company sponsors an activity for the library, what does it gain?

Through this strategy the committee needs to identify opportunity analysis which constitutes a planned attempt at listing possible requirements of the corporate on one side and activities or strengths of the charity on the other. The ability to link these to mutual advantage will result in opportunities of cooperation which could be progressed through formally constituted proposals.

In this aspect the committee is able to identify two corporate bodies namely the Penang Butterfly Farm and Read-Rite Malaysia. The Penang Butterfly Farm wants to launch its children's caterpillar club using the children's library members as their inaugural members. As such this company is able to benefit from this cooperation by identifying new clientele group and creating an environment for a project launch.

Launching of the Caterpillar Club Sponsored by the Penang Butterfly Farm.

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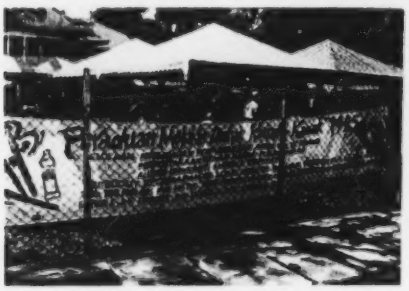
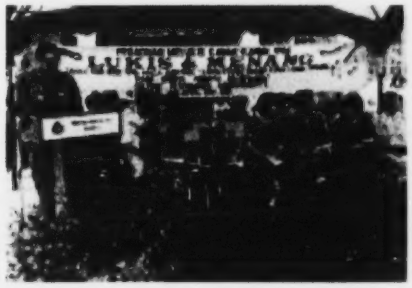
The Read-Rite Malaysia on the other hand sponsored the Art competition for the children's library members and school children from the rural areas. This program which was started in 1995 became an annual affair for three consecutive years and had contributed towards a dual purpose. Firstly this program was fully sponsored by Read-Rite and secondly it had enabled the rural children not only to participate but also visit 'their' library - the Penang Children's Library. At the same time the company was able to enhance its corporate image and carried out its community service.

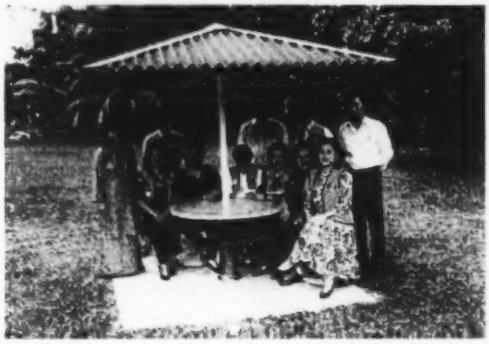
Children's Art Competition Sponsored by Read-Rite, Malaysia.



To be able to identify target groups and earmarked companies in Penang which was 'ready' to 'invest' was also one of the steps that the committee took. Again the position of the committee members played a crucial part in securing funds from companies. For instance Sharp-Roxy donated the media equipment for the media section of the Children's Library thus enabling the Library to provide electronic service. The Penang Lions and Lioness Club donated garden sets to the Children's Library to enable them to portray their contribution to the community. This contribution benefited the patrons of the library as they now have a shady place to wait for their parents and also serve as a recreational place.



The Garden Set Donated by the Penang Lions & Lioness Club



One of the objectives of the Children's Library was to have materials in the four main languages giving the national language in priority and providing for the other three languages namely English language, Mandarin and Tamil. Since the Children's Library was situated in a Chinese majority area there was an urgent demand for materials in Mandarin. There was no funding for the Library's collection from the government as it was initially agreed that the Committee was to raise funds for the collection of the Children's Library. As such the committee under the patronage of the Chief Minister's wife approached a few bookshops to donate Mandarin titles and managed to secure a donor and through her zealous effort the Children's Library has been receiving an annual contribution of children Mandarin tittles.

It will not be good enough for the Children's Library to be merely offering only lending and reference services and it certainly will no longer be enough to be a keeper of books. Even at the onset, the committee wanted the Children's Library to be a special resource center for children. Not only will the child expect a relevant kind of library experience in its information seeking and recreational reading behavior but is able to be exposed to programs and activities that can nurture creativity and critical thinking and life long learning habits .

With the shortage of experienced staff, the Children's Library Sub-Committee on Activities had to look into other avenues to ensure that these programs and activities were carried out every weekend. By co-opting teachers of preschools and kindergartens, lecturers from Teachers Training Colleges and the nearby University as members of the Library Sub-Committee on Activities, there was always a continuous flow of volunteers to conduct activities in the Children's Library. Story telling sessions and craft activities were conducted by the preschool and kindergarten teachers. The students from the Teachers Training Colleges also conducted story telling sessions and English creative writing skills programs. This had enabled the Children Library to provide an increasing number of services to foster language development in young children. The children were also exposed to educational video filming and editing techniques by the University students. Again here the Committee worked out a win-win situation whereby in the case of the preschool and kindergarten teachers there were allowed to use the Children's Library's reference materials as teaching aids in their own environment; the lecturers from the Teachers Training Colleges had a resource center (in terms of place and children) to train their trainee and English language training programs. These arrangement was made in order to strengthen and foster good relationship between the volunteers and also to sustain these activities.

From time to time the public awareness regarding the need for volunteers to run activities is very gratifying. The Penang Butterfly Farm carried out story telling sessions coupled with life display of caterpillars and butterflies species. The Japanese women association also volunteered origami sessions weekly. These programs are used to stimulate interest to reading to children and the early teenagers, encourage library membership and lead to regular participation at story time sessions.

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Puspanita helping out in the Workshop of the traditional game of "congkak"

University Students Helping Out in the Video Filming & Editing Techniques Activity

Origami activities with the Japanese Women Association

The Rotary club in Penang in 1997 embarked on an educational project targeted primarily at encouraging parents and their younger children to discover the world of books and to gain knowledge from reading them. The campaign which emphasized the value of reading aloud to children even before they begin to read worked very well with the children's Library. The cooperation was a mutually beneficial 'transaction'. It was not as if it was a 'sales transaction' but in the end both parties benefit. The Rotary Clubs of Penang got a product or more or less tangible services like exposure, publicity and good PR and the Children's Library not only benefited from a very good program but received a donation of books to sustain the campaign and again this added valuable materials to the collection.

In promoting awareness of the cultural heritage and tradition, the Children's Library conducts traditional games activities. Workshops and competition are organized with the help of Puspanita (The Association of the Wives of Government Officers).

After identifying the target groups for the fundraising projects it is then necessary for the committee to formulate fundraising proposals based on the following information regarding the identified company. That the company should have:-

i. A disposable income budget earmarked for charity

ii. Charity policy

iii. Past track record of giving to charity

iv. Given usual amounts

v. Projects/programmes preference

vi. Current promotion/sponsorship programmes and commercial aspirations

Apart from these the Committee should also have a personality sketch of vital functionaries of the company.

After acquiring the information relevant to develop the fundraising proposal, the Committee then blended the information inputs with the corporate's requirement and strengths or activities of the charity to concretize the 'Opportunities' list 'Opportunities' which could feature high on the priority of a corporate and also yield maximum funds for the charity should be accorded precedence and developed into suitable proposals for presentation. While developing the proposal the Committee realize in order to succeed, the proposal must be complete in all aspects, albeit, brief and relevant and to highlight the value of the proposal and not the cost of it.

After formulating the proposal, the next step is to infiltrate into the Corporate though the Marketing Director, or the PR/Communication executive to discuss the anatomy of the proposal. The last step is the presentation of the proposal and the best method is face to face fundraising presentation whereby it should be well conceived, not exceed twenty minutes and aided with a very brief video of our charity project.

The strongest point about a face-to-face presentation is that the Fundraiser's personality traits and powers of persuasion can be well projected and suitably supported with body language. Sponsorship or promotions are the most preferred form of charity support by the Corporate Sector in view of its intimate link with the commercial advantage of having tax exemption benefits.

Special Events Fundraising

The Committee is also successful in fundraising through special events. In 1995 the committee organized a charity Premier and managed to secure a corporate firm to sponsor the Charity Premier. Although tickets were sold to individuals the committee wanted the corporate sectors to sponsor seats for the disadvantaged and socially deprived children. The main sponsor, T A Securities again was regarded under fundraising as a 'commercial deal' whereby it was a business-like, mutually beneficial transaction where both parties benefited. The corporate sector benefited through having income tax exemption and enhanced public image, the children library not only got their donation but was able to carry out charity work as well.

Closing Remarks

Commitment from the community is very crucial for sustainability of the Penang Children's library. No doubt the Children's Library was very fortunate to have a very committed, dedicated and hard

working committee but it is still the main responsibility of the Penang Public Library Corporation to ensure its success.

Credibility and transparency is of utmost importance. Fundraising is not a one-way act of giving but a process of social exchange between donor and recipient. To continue the relationship, the recipient provides some form of satisfaction to the donor. This may be simple as a thank you letter or as complex as the naming of a building.

The timing of the recipient's response plays an important role in the social exchange. A prompt and timely response is normally expected and is assuring to the donor. Trust is important in this relationship. Recipient must be accountable and be seen to be faithful to their stated purpose. It does not go well if an organisation appeals for funds for one purpose but uses it for another indiscriminately.

Public relation is very important. Always keep in touch with your donors and potential donors. Always go for the same donors and try go get new donors. The simple thing to remember is, ASK,

Lastly, we must always remember the most basic principles of Fundraising. Fundraising is not about money. It is about people, about needs that have to be met. The Penang community spearheaded by the Children's Library Committee took upon themselves the responsibility to set up a Children's Library. Our children are the hope of the future. If we teach our children to love to read, we are handing down a special kind of magic to them – a gift that will enrich their lives as nothing else can do.

THE CHILDREN'S LIBRARY: A GIFT OF LOVE FROM THE COMMUNITY

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